

THE STORY BEHIND

The Godfather

BY THE MEN WHO LIVED IT

Few movies have created as great a stir as *The Godfather*. Even as it gains critical acclaim and promises to become the biggest box office hit ever, controversy surrounds it. Does it paint an honest picture of organized crime? Does it glorify violence? Is it anti-Italian? Here is an inside report on a fascinating film.

PRODUCER AL RUDDY



"I know there is a Mafia. But other ethnic groups are just as involved."

Albert S. Ruddy, producer of *"The Godfather,"* the most controversial (and possibly most profitable) movie in decades,

says: "It was the most miserable film I can think of to make. Nobody enjoyed one day of it."

Although the word is not used in his movie, Ruddy believes there is a Mafia; indeed, he had to deal with elements of it to produce the picture. But neither organized crime nor the Italian-American Civil Liberties League plagued him during production of *"The Godfather."*

Back in February 1971, when the screenplay was still being completed by director Francis Ford Coppola and Mario Puzo, who had written the best-selling novel, Ruddy wasn't sure he would be able to film *"The Godfather"* at all.

Italians, individually and collectively, were furious over the possibility that the picture would imply that all Italians are criminal. Ruddy received a score of threatening telephone calls and became concerned enough to put a heavy .45 automatic revolver in his desk drawer.

"I was actually afraid at one time that I might have to use this gun," he says. "I didn't know whether the calls were coming from the Mafia or not. But they threatened my life. It was disconcerting. I told the local police, and they also informed me that I was being followed by unknown persons. Every night I and the four people who work with me here at Paramount would switch our cars around to throw off these unseen 'tails.'"

"One night my secretary was followed all the way home. Once she got inside her house she called the police, but the car that had been tailing her disappeared. The next morning she found that all the windows in her car had been blown out by a shotgun blast.

"I don't know who it was," Ruddy says. "but once I got to New York and had a meeting with the Italian-American Civil Liberties League, that sort of thing stopped."

"Certainly some of the League members belonged to the Mafia. But I met with thousands of hard-working, honest Italian-Americans who know nothing about organized crime."

Actually, Ruddy was called to New York by his Paramount bosses—among them Stanley Jaffe (then president of the company) and Robert Evans, studio production chief—to make his peace with Italian-Americans or face insurmountable odds in filming the picture.

"When I got back to New York, Paramount had received at least 100 letters from very big United States Senators and Congressmen. If I made their names public they'd be greatly embarrassed. One of them is a Presidential candidate.

"All of those letters had the same ring to them, even (continued on page 64)

"GODSON" AL PACINO



"I'm broke; I'm even in debt. But I don't care. I've been broke before."

The morning after *"The Godfather"* premiere, Al Pacino was a star. Pacino, who played Michael, heir to Don Vito Corleone's savage "family business," was the perfect choice for the part he almost didn't get.

Two years ago, when the film was being cast, Paramount executives wanted a "name" actor to play Michael, the longest role in the film—the role that has to keep the film going after Don Vito (Marlon Brando) dies. But when director Francis Ford Coppola said his choice for the role was Pacino, a virtual unknown, a screen test was arranged. Pacino showed up, but he didn't even know his lines.

Viewing the test, the studio heads couldn't understand Coppola's insistence that this intense, short (5-foot 7-inch), very Italian-looking (dark hair, darker eyes, large Roman nose) actor could play Michael Corleone, the Ivy League Don-in-waiting. Even Coppola was annoyed by Pacino's unpreparedness; the director called him "self-destructive," but still signed (continued on page 67)

"GODSON" JAMES CAAN



"Some critics thought I was the only Sicilian in the picture. And I'm not even Italian."

Of all the members of *"The Godfather"* cast, probably none was more frustrated from beginning to end than James

Caan, the hot-tempered young actor who played hot-tempered Sonny Wortzik. First, Caan had hoped to play the role of Michael, Don Vito's youngest son and successor as "godfather." But it was the lesser role of Sonny that he won.

Then, after the picture was completed, the producers found that it ran very long—almost four hours. About 45 minutes were deleted and left on the cutting room floor. Some key scenes involving Caan were squeezed out.

"I was plenty steamed," Caan says, "because I'd done a lot of work in four or five major scenes that were cut. (continued on page 107)



The Godfather

continued

some of the same wording. Each Senator and Representative asked us to contact the Italian-American Civil Liberties League before we went ahead with *The Godfather*.

"The pressure started to build on a specifically political basis. There were no promises of retribution by the Mafia, no criminal threats. We couldn't turn our backs on these important men in Washington."

On his own, without Paramount's approval, Ruddy met with representatives of the League. He first spoke to Anthony Colombo, who was running the League. Colombo is the son of reputed underworld figure Joseph Colombo, who was later shot and gravely wounded during a League rally in New York.

"I was fully aware how powerful the Italian community is in New York politics," Ruddy says. "I told Colombo I just wanted to sit around and talk about the movie. So we met at the Park Sheraton Hotel: about 600 members of the League and me. It was my intent, and I believe the book's also, not to defame any ethnic group. I had no intention of making a *schlock* gangster movie—and I told them so. They reacted favorably."

"I agreed to delete the terms *Mafia* and *Cosa Nostra* from the picture. After all, they were only used three or four times in the book. In return, the League urged New Yorkers of Italian descent whom we'd be working with to cooperate with us."

Ruddy says that the Syndicate also sent out word that obstructing production of the movie was taboo. From that day on, *The Godfather* encountered not a moment's interference.

"When I made the deal with the League it looked as if we had knuckled under and would emasculate the film," Ruddy says angrily. "I felt at that point that I was taking a beating from the press and some of my friends. But ultimately I had to stand or fall with what turned out on the screen."

Had the Mafia opposed him, Ruddy

A Psychiatrist's View: DOES "THE GODFATHER" GLORIFY VIOLENCE?

No, says Theodore Isaac Rubin, M.D. "Scenes of crime and violence against the public at large are carefully avoided in *The Godfather*. As a result, the rewards from such crimes—an important factor in glorifying crime and violence—are seldom seen. The film is more concerned with interfamily warfare. This 'family business' provides acts of questionable bravery, characterizations of shallowness and a timbre of yesterday rather than today. The film is entertaining and I feel that, fortunately, it will have no great effect on youth or crime."

is positive that the motion picture would never have been made in New York—and perhaps nowhere else.

"About six months before I met with the League, it held a big rally in Madi-

A Crime Writer's View: DOES "THE GODFATHER" GIVE AN HONEST PICTURE OF THE MAFIA?

No, says Nicholas Gage of *The New York Times*, author of *The Mafia Is Not an Equal Opportunity Employer*. Gage writes that *The Godfather* "reveals that Mafiosi eat pasta, love their wives and children and place a great deal of emphasis on honor, respect and family loyalty. . . . All the people done away with by the Corleone family are obviously baddies, and unattractive to boot. The members of the family are good-looking and kind to children. . . . In all the romance with the Mafia, the [criminal] impact of the organization is forgotten."

son Square Garden, starring Frank Sinatra," Ruddy recalls. "It raised about \$600,000 for the sole purpose of stopping the filming of *Godfather*."

"Even after I made the deal, some League members wanted us to drop Italian surnames and use names like Smith and Jones and Johnson. But I made it clear that we weren't going to change the quality of the book."

"What annoyed me at the time was that the press made a big thing out of our dropping the terms *Mafia* and *Cosa Nostra* from the picture. But Attorney General John Mitchell had already issued a directive that his department would no longer use those words. And ABC had agreed not to use the words in its *FBI* television series. But those agreements just barely made the news."

"Yes, I believe there is a Mafia. I know there is. But people use the word indiscriminately. The Mafia is just a small part of organized crime—the Italian part. Other ethnic groups are just as deeply involved. Maybe they aren't as colorful."

"To get back to Sinatra, I'll never forget how opposed he was to the picture. He caused one of my early upsets."

"Mario Puzo had come to Hollywood to write the screenplay, and we'd gone to Chasen's for dinner. Sinatra was sitting at a nearby table. I stopped to visit with some friends, and when I got back to my table Frank and Mario were screaming at one another. Frank called Mario a stool pigeon and a fink for the FBI. He threatened to break Puzo's legs. Meanwhile two guys were holding Mario back. Puzo is a tough guy and he was ready to kill Frank."

Another witness to the altercation reported that John Wayne—not an especially close friend of Sinatra's—was seated nearby and offered to punch Puzo if Sinatra needed help.

"Ironically, Mario is one of the great Sinatra fans of all time," Ruddy said.

Sinatra, according to Ruddy, believed that the character of Johnny Fontane, the Mafia-controlled entertainer, was patterned after him.

"It's one of the elements that proved we weren't just making another film," Ruddy said. "Why is there such interest in *The Godfather*? Because of

everything that happened during the making of the film."

"Like the Vic Damone thing, Vic's a pal of Sinatra's. We wanted either him or Al Martino for the role of Johnny Fontane. We talked to them both, and Vic's agents agreed that he would do the part. Although Fontane isn't a major character, he's in the film a long time—at the wedding, in Vegas, at the funeral. He only has a few speaking lines, but we needed him for seven weeks."

"I think we were going to pay Vic \$750 a week. His agents said he makes \$15,000 a week in night clubs and would lose money on the picture. But Vic agreed anyhow."

"When he came in to pick up the script, all we gave him—as with the other actors—were the pages with his dialogue."

"Vic picked up an envelope with two pages in it and freaked out. He had thought he was in the whole movie. Then he comes out with a statement that he won't do the picture because it defames all Italian-Americans—which is absurd."

"So we gave the part to Al Martino, who really had to leave the country in the 1950s, when his career was at its peak, due to pressure from organized crime. He had to leave to stay alive."

"Any similarity between Johnny Fontane and Sinatra is diminished in the picture. I think the character was closer to Sinatra in the book. But no character in the novel, Mario Puzo says, was based on a single person. As a matter of fact, Martino was one of

HOW TO SHOOT A \$100,000 AMBUSH

One of the bloodiest scenes in *The Godfather* is the murder of Sonny Corleone. Actor James Caan is ambushed at a tollbooth and literally shredded by submachinegun bullets.

"We were going to film the scene on a Long Island causeway," producer Al Ruddy recalls, "but we couldn't control the automobile traffic all day. So we built two tollbooths with breakaway glass windows on a deserted runway at Floyd Bennett Field, outside New York City; the runway looks like a highway. We even put up billboards. Then we had ten men with machine guns blast Jimmy. Those scenes can always be dangerous. But I decided to have some fun with Jimmy."

"It took about two hours for special effects man A. D. Flowers and makeup man Dick Smith to rig Jimmy for the scene—he was sort of a walking bomb, with lots of little powder explosive charges on him."

"An hour before we started filming, I told Caan: 'I'm really nervous. We've got a production goof. We need you for another two weeks, and you could really get hurt in this scene. It would ruin our shooting schedule for the rest of the picture. So be careful.'"

"Jimmy turned pale. He yelled, 'Get me A. D. Flowers, quick!'"

"We finally shot the scene in one take, but it took half a day to set it up."

"We bought a beautiful 1941 Lincoln Continental, which we riddled with bullet holes—we bored 200 separate holes into the car before the scene. Each hole was puttied over, painted, then filled with an explosive charge that could be touched off by remote control. We blew hell out of that car. We couldn't afford to spend more time

the prototypes of Fontane in Puzo's book."

So far as Ruddy knows, Sinatra has not yet seen the picture.

The most crucial event during production of *The Godfather* was the casting of Marlon Brando. Objections were raised by Italian actors who were convinced that Marlon couldn't play a Mafia chieftain convincingly. Moreover, Brando had come off a decade of disastrous, unprofitable pictures.

But Ruddy wanted Brando. "There were only two actors I ever wanted for the role of Don Vito Corleone," Ruddy says. "Either Sir Laurence Olivier or Brando. When I mentioned Brando to the Paramount brass, they said, 'No way. Who needs a guy with a string of failures?'"

"When I called Marlon he said he hadn't read the book. He told me, 'I don't know what the hell it is.'"

Ruddy swears that Brando did not seek out the role or even care about doing it. Ruddy drove to Brando's house and left him a copy of Puzo's book. Brando told Ruddy he would let him know if he thought he could play the role.

A few days later, Brando called to say, "Yeah, I can play this character."

Ruddy was jubilant. "We had the man we wanted. But Stanley Jaffe, the president of Paramount, didn't want Brando. So we had to find a way to get the studio to buy Marlon. We asked him if he would do a little video tape test for us—without sound. Can you imagine asking a man of Brando's stature to do a screen test? (continued)

and use more cars for that kind of detailed work. We could have done the scene for \$25,000, but we ended up spending \$100,000."

Caan recalls the scene vividly: "My clothes and hair and some places on my face were fitted with small brass casings. Each one had a small slit in it, filled with a gunpowder charge. On top of the charge they put a small sack of fake blood. Then the little casings were wired and attached to a hidden cable behind my back—all except the casings in my hair and on my face. There was no powder in those. They attached invisible wires to those sacks and, when the scene was shot, technicians out of camera range pulled the wires, causing the rocks to pop and send 'blood' spurting out."

"But the other powder charges were all controlled by electric wires that ran up my legs to the cable and then to an electrical console. You have to make sure the slits are facing out or they'll hurt you pretty bad. They can blow a hole in you or give you powder burns."

"I wore more of those charges than any actor in any movie ever made—about 110 of them. When those guys started firing the tommyguns, a special effects man at the console began hitting the buttons fast; each one touched off a little explosion that made it look as if bullets were ripping into me. Simultaneously, other men pulled the very fine wires that popped pellets on my face and head."

"In the middle of that scene I thought they'd blow my whole suit apart. But I wasn't hurt. And you can see how realistic the results were. I didn't mind the scene too much, but I wouldn't be honest if I said it didn't make me a little nervous."

"But Marlon was gracious—and great. He pulled back his hair and streaked it, put black shoe polish under his eyes, padded out his cheeks and jaw with Kleenex. Then he held a cup of espresso and an Italian cigar.

"That piece of no-dialogue tape is a classic," Ruddy says. "When I took the test to New York, they flipped out. They didn't even know it was Brando

until the end. Bob Evans wanted him there and then, Jaffe wasn't sure."

Ruddy pressed for a decision. If not Brando, then who? he asked.

"The Don is in the movie no more than fifty percent of the time," explains Ruddy. "But we had to have an actor with the power and mystique to permeate those scenes in which he didn't appear. Brando has that blunt power."

Brando was paid a comparatively

small fee for his performance (\$50,000) but was given a generous share of the picture's profits (he could make as much as \$1,250,000 on the film).

Ruddy doesn't feel that he has helped to salvage Brando's career. "His talent is constant," said Ruddy. "It's just the material that counts. Believe me, Marlon still gets offered every major role in Hollywood because actors and directors all want to work with him.

"There were some marvelous moments with Marlon while we were making the film. The day on Mott Street, when the script called for him to be shot while coming out of a vegetable store, thousands of bystanders looked on. Marlon came running out of the store and was gunned down. He slumped against his car as blood spurted from his wounds. When he fell to the street there were gasps from the crowd and a horrified silence.

"When Marlon stood up after Coppola yelled 'Cut!' the crowd cheered—and Brando made a low, sweeping bow. He loved the people on Mott Street and they loved him.

Rain delays production

Brando signed for six weeks of work. But the final scene, the one in which Don Corleone dies in his garden, called for a hot sunny day—and a rainy spell delayed production.

"Ordinarily you don't go to an actor like Marlon Brando and ask what I asked," Ruddy says. "I asked him to go back to Hollywood and return to New York in a week when everything dried out. That could have meant an additional \$40,000 to Brando. But he didn't charge us for the extra week. He just did it." There was one humorous casting problem. It involved Gianni Russo, a brash young man with no acting experience. Russo came in to see Ruddy in a classic Bentley car driven by a miniskirted Japanese girl chauffeur.

"This guy has got to be kidding," Ruddy told his associates. He forgot about Russo for four months. Then he showed up in New York and said he was right for the part of Carlo, the traitorous Corleone brother-in-law. "We asked him to play a scene for us—the one in which Carlo beats up his wife. Stanley Jaffe's secretary portrayed the woman, Gianni played the scene so realistically that the poor secretary was terrified. He got the part."

Now that *The Godfather* is a hit, Ruddy has second thoughts.

"I don't think our picture glorifies the Mafia or insults Italians," he says. "It does humanize criminal elements. But no matter how much you like these people, there's a lot of killing and moments of great brutality.

"The brutality is faithful to the book—and to the way some people in organized crime operate. Yes, some audiences applaud the brutal scenes. But I don't think this is an emotional response. I think they are applauding the technical skill with which those scenes were shot."

Was the movie made with the assistance and blessing of the Mafia?

Ruddy hedges.

"Let's say these Syndicate men are not two-dimensional human beings. They are very strong family men. They have an almost Biblical feeling for family. You don't have to write contracts with them. If they shake your hand it is as good as their word. If you keep your word, they keep theirs. I wish I could do business in Hollywood that way.

"Without their help it would have been impossible. There would have been pickets, breakdowns, labor problems, cut cables, all kinds of things. I don't think anyone would have been physically hurt. But the picture simply could not have been made without their approval."

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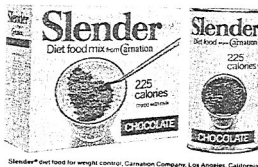
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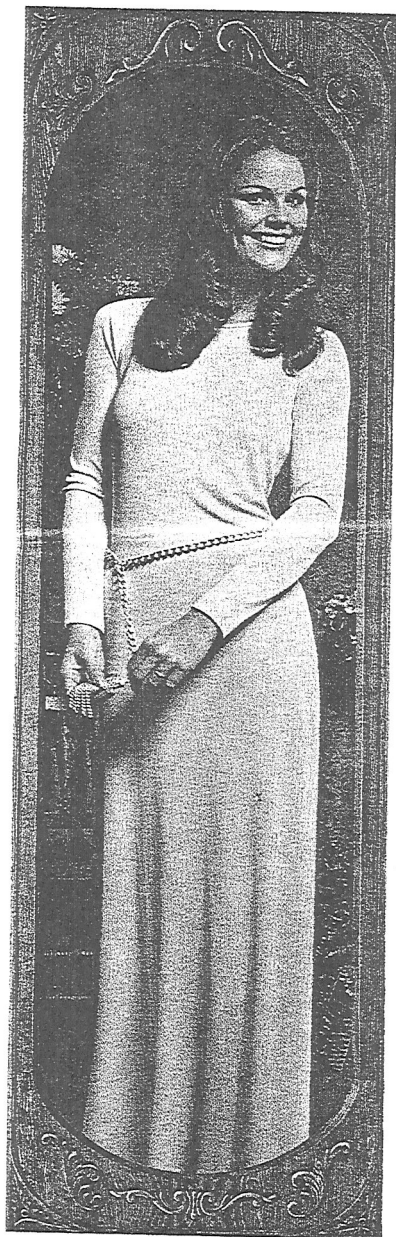
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GODFATHER: PACINO *continued*

Pacino for the very important part.

As he paced nervously around the living room of the Boston apartment he rents while starring on stage there in *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel*, Al spoke to the JOURNAL about *The Godfather* and about himself.

"I knew Francis was the only one who wanted me, so I felt, 'What's the sense of learning lines? No matter what I do I won't get the part.' Besides, they tested me on the opening scene, the wedding scene. It made absolutely no sense to me because I hadn't seen the rest of the script.

"Francis knew I could do the part and so did I, but he kept asking me to test again and again. I didn't want to go... I don't go where I'm not wanted. If someone doesn't want me for a part that's okay. I understand. I don't even get mad. They just tell me and I don't come around again. But when they don't want me and keep telling me to come back, well, under those circumstances, I'm not learning lines. If that's being self-destructive, then okay, call me self-destructive.

"When I finally got the part, the pressure was still there. It was obvious that some people didn't want me. I remember saying, 'I'll never make it through this picture; it's going to kill me.' Then, about a month later, when they began to piece my film together and liked what they saw, things got better.

"Playing Michael was a hellish experience. I used to get up at five in the morning thinking about where I was in the film, what the transition was. You know, when you shoot a movie you don't just begin at the beginning and follow the script to the end. The first week we did the scene where I shoot two men in a restaurant. That's why I have to block out a part, to figure out the transition from one block to another. I had to be sure I was building up to the point where Michael takes over as the Don.

"I learned a lot, though. The other actors didn't flounder around like I did—I like to search and work and it takes me a lot of time. Sometimes I'm lazy. *The Godfather* knocked the laziness out of me.

"From Brando, I learned to come late. No, I'm kidding. Well, to be honest, he *was* late sometimes. But Brando's okay; he's his own man. He has learned how to get by in this line of work and to maintain his dignity and ability. And he's interested in others—what they're doing and what they're feeling. When you're as big as Brando, it's pretty hard not to think about yourself. But not Brando. He got along with everyone.

I took off my pants

"We all pulled gags to relieve the tension. In a scene where I sit behind the desk, wardrobe made this big fuss about getting me a shirt with a smaller collar. So while everyone was looking at the shirt, I took off my pants. When I came out from behind the desk, I got a laugh, even though we had to do the scene over."

The Godfather may have made Al Pacino a star, but it didn't make him rich. Actor Gianni Russo, who plays the relatively minor role of Carlo Rizzi, the wife-beater, was paid \$17,000 for 17 weeks' work. Pacino got \$35,000

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for a year's work. Yet he insists he didn't get a raw deal on the money. "The only raw deal I got," he says, "was the feeling of not being wanted."

The money has already been spent. He explains: "To begin with, MGM sued me for \$2 million dollars because they said I was committed to *The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight*. So I paid for lawyers. I paid for everything. I'm broke; I'm even in debt. But I don't care. I've been broke before."

Alfredo James Pacino was born April 25, 1940, in New York City's East Harlem. His father, a mason, left home when Al was three. His mother, Rose, took her son and moved in with her parents, James and Kate Gerardi, in the South Bronx. Al was the only child in a family that had a tough time making ends meet. Left to his own devices, he longed for the friends he didn't have—so he would invent them. When his mother took him to movies,

he'd remember characters and scenes and yank them from his memory when he wanted a friend.

At nine he decided to be a priest because he loved to go to church. He gave up the idea when a nun whacked him on his hand for talking during service. Al still views the incident incredulously, asking, "How could I have been talking when I didn't know another soul in the room to talk to?"

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GODFATHER: PACINO

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He has long since stopped going to Mass, but during the week he'll stop in a church to listen to the music and look at the decor. "There's something beautiful about a church, isn't there? It's peaceful. Mass is fine for some people, but not for me. I'm not an atheist, I believe there is a God. I know there is a God; sometimes I see him out there in the park [Boston Commons]. I saw him there last night. . . ."

At P.S. 98, Al excelled only in dramatics. When a teacher suggested that he switch to Manhattan's High School for the Performing Arts, he did. Bad grades (he remembers getting a 4 on a math test) and bad times made him drop out. A long series of odd jobs (messenger, usher, superintendent) all ended in disaster. He was his small family's sole source of support, but he refuses to discuss that period of his life, simply calling it the "lost years." Once, when he was an usher in a Manhattan theater, he bet a co-worker he could make people do anything he wanted. Pacino walked out to the front of the theater and told the waiting patrons that the line for the next show was forming across the street. He led them across Third Avenue, queued them up next to a department store and left them there. When he returned to the theater to collect his bet, he lost his job. The only ushering job he regretted losing was one at Carnegie Hall. "The music was wonderful, but I kept putting people in the wrong seats."

Pacino was admitted to Actor's Studio in 1966, and by 1968 had won an Obie Award for his off-Broadway role in *The Indian Wants the Bronx*. The following year he won a Tony Award for Broadway's *Does a Tiger Wear a Necktie?* In 1970 he made his first film, *Panic in Needle Park*. Then came *The Godfather*.

The deaths of his mother at age 43 and his grandfather affected Pacino so deeply that today he pleads, "I can't say any more about it." Yet he didn't seek psychiatric help until he had some acting success and found he couldn't handle it.

"I started seeing everything in one color, so I decided it was time to talk to somebody. I went to a couple of psychiatrists a couple of times—and then I just never went back. But when the panic button is pushed, when your nose suddenly looks like a banana and you start peeling it—or one eye starts going into your forehead—well, then you go for help. Each time I went back I went to a different doctor because I was too embarrassed to go to the old one. I had made appointments and never showed up. But I'm okay now. I don't think psychiatry is for me—but I could change my mind tomorrow."

Bachelor Al's style of living is modest, as are his hobbies: walking and listening to music. In Boston he is working in the Theater Company for scale pay of \$200 a week. His 3½-room apartment represents a big step up; the last time he was appearing with the company he lived in a 5-by-7-foot room. His girl friend, actress Jill Clayburg (*Portnoy's Complaint*), found the apartment for him and has added little touches: paintings of Italy, a colorful patchwork throw over the sofa, little things to keep Al happy while she is

off in Houston, Texas, making another film. He speaks of her warmly ("Jill's a lovely girl") and humorously ("The only reason I've stuck with her for five years is because she can pronounce my name right—it's PaChino, not PaSSino!"); but he never uses words like *love* or *marriage*. He does say that for the first time in his life he wants a family. "Ten kids," he says, "and I'll adopt them if I have to—to get all ten!"

Pacino knows that Paramount would like him to star in the sequel to *The Godfather*.

"This time they want me," he says, "but I don't know where I can take the character of Michael. Where can he go? He's made. They'll have to put the money up front this time. If I like the script, I'll do it—but no matter how much they offer me, I won't do it just for money. Anyone who acts for money is crazy. I've never done it and I'm not going to start now." —MARY FIORE

GODFATHER: CAAN

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Remember the scene in which I get the telephone call that my father, the Don, has been shot? The picture now cuts to my brother Michael right after I hang up the telephone. Here's where a couple of my best scenes were cut. Originally I get the call. Then I go tell my mother that my father has been shot.

"This sequence demonstrated a sensitive side of Sonny. It showed him going to his father's room and preparing to take over the family's work. There were all kinds of nice moments—like Sonny not being able to bring himself to sit in his father's chair. Instead, he pulls up another chair beside the desk."

"I worked hard on those scenes. They meant something to me as an actor. Little things—showing Sonny's inability to cry because he thinks it's unmasculine. But his voice cracks when he talks to his mother."

"They cut another scene in which Sonny meets the 'capos' [Mafia chiefs] and decides what they are going to do. And there was a scene in which Michael comes back to the house before he goes to the hospital and I treat Michael like he was 12 years old."

Caan insists that he is no longer bitter. The picture has turned out well and his notices have been as good as any in the cast. "Some critics thought I was the only Sicilian in the picture," Caan says proudly, "and I'm not even Italian. But I went to Brooklyn for several weeks and hung around with Italian guys, picking up their language and mannerisms. One guy always talked to everybody like you were across the room from him—even when he was sitting beside you. I used him as a model. Most actors underplay. Not me. If I'm bad, I'm awful. But if I'm good, I'm good."

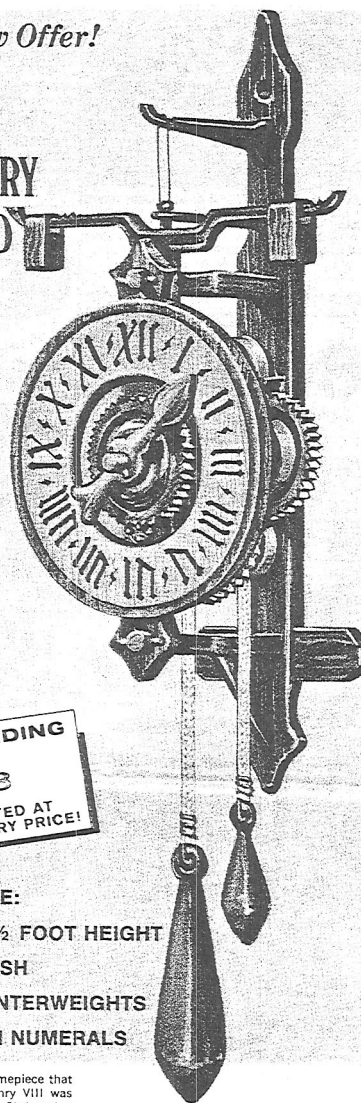
(Caan also can draw consolation from the realization that during the past year he has starred in the No. 1 motion picture, *The Godfather*, and in the No. 1 TV movie, *Brian's Song*, in which he played cancer-stricken pro football player Brian Piccolo.)

Caan shook his curly head. "I was really upset when I first saw the finished print of *The Godfather*. It was like painting a fourteen-foot canvas and ending up with a three-foot canvas. I felt like telling everybody they ought to see the other eleven feet!"

—VERNON SCOTT

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